

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received **May - 9 1983**

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Boxwood

and/or common W. C. Dowdell House

**2. Location**

street & number 406<sup>E</sup> North Street, East N/A not for publication

city, town Talladega N/A vicinity of

state Alabama code 01 county Talladega code 121

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: none

**4. Owner of Property**

name W. C. Dowdell Estate (c/o Mrs. Bruce Thomas)

street & number 16 Ledge Lane

city, town San Antonio N/A vicinity of state Texas

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Probate Office, Talladega County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Talladega state Alabama

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1970-present  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good - YAM  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Exterior: Boxwood is basically an L-shaped, one-and-a-half story frame structure on a brick pier foundation. A widely-overhanging hipped roof, breaking into gabled wall dormers, caps both the main block and the ell at the northwest rear. The main ridge of the roof is punctuated at either end of the front portion, as well as the back wing, with decorative chimneypots. Wall sheathing is board and batten, arcuated beneath soffits and sills. A notable exterior feature is the latticed one-story porches across the front, and to either side of the rear wing. These are composed of slender trellis-supports linked by a continuous latticework balustrade which is echoed above in a broad, latticed frieze directly beneath the eaves of the porch roof. The trio of wall dormers across the facade of the house, as well as those to either side of the ell, each frame a single tall Gothic window. Lower windows are square-headed, those to either side of the main door consisting of a broad central opening with narrow sidelights. All windows retain their original louvered blinds. A shed-roof extension abutting the northeast rear of the main block appears to be nearly as old as the house itself, and conforms closely to it in cosmetic design. The only major change to the core structure is the addition, back of the ell, of a shed-roofed kitchen wing--probably in the early part of this century.

Interior: A central hall is flanked by a single large room to either side. A pair of doors at the rear of the hall open, respectively, onto the porch at the east side of the ell, and into a secondary hallway between the parlor and the dining room which occupies the lower floor of the wing. Folding doors open from the west side of the front hall into the parlor. Against the opposite wall of the hall, a stair with wide molded handrail and octagonal newels ascends to the second floor, curving slightly at the top so as to form a broad open well. Arched statuary niches are set into the truncated angles of the hallway to either side of a double-leaf front door, which is framed by narrow sidelights and a rectangular transom. There is a third statuary niche at the curve of the staircase. The secondary hallway likewise contains a stair, somewhat more simply treated. Wookwork throughout is typical of the mid-19th century, with wide, plain baseboards and four-paneled doors accentuated by bolelection molding. Mantelpieces, too, are simple in design, consisting of molded pilasters carrying an unadorned frieze and mantelshelf. The upper floor conforms in its layout to the first story, except for the installation of a 20th-century bathroom at the reentrant angle between the main block and the wing. Wooden floors, as well as plaster walls and ceilings, appear to be original.

Dependencies and general setting: Two frame dependencies stand to the rear of the house, at each corner of the yard: a ruinous frame carriage house or stable at the northwest corner, and a servant house or kitchen at the northeast corner. The latter is the oldest, and appears to be contemporary with, if not earlier, than the main structure. It is a two-room rectangular structure with gable roof--the southernmost room being clapboarded; the other sheathed with board and batten, suggesting that it was added. This structure is now in an advanced state of deterioration.

Magnolia trees virtually screen the front of the house from the street, while here and there are remnants of the boxwood from which the house takes its name.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

Specific dates 1854

Builder/Architect

Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- c. Architecture. Boxwood, the Dowdell house, represents the rare occurrence of the Gothic Revival impulse in antebellum Alabama domestic architecture. Moreover, the house is one of the oldest expressions in the state of that particular strain of the Gothic Revival known as "carpenter's Gothic," because of its frank and bold use of wood as a medium to create a romantically picturesque Gothic feeling.

Highly popular in the Northeast after 1840, the Gothic Revival made little headway in mid-19th century Alabama against a lingering preference for a sort of watered-down classicism, or, alternately, for the fashionable new "Italian villa" mode (considered to be more appropriate for a southern climate). Thus today, Alabama can count only a score or so clear-cut examples of Gothic Revival house-design. Perhaps no more than half a dozen of these pre-date the Civil War. And of the tiny latter group, Boxwood is one of the best, the first, and the least-altered. In fact, the house is unsurpassed anywhere in the state as a loyal embodiment of the design principles set forth by one of the prime movers of the Gothic Revival trend, Andrew Jackson Downing, in his influential 1851 work, The Architecture of Country Houses. Boxwood was erected less than five years later. Its board-and-batten walls, wide overhanging eaves, steeply-gabled wall dormers, and graceful latticework porches all point to the direct influence of Downing's ideals. Among other things, Downing advocated an honesty of structural expression; hence, wood that looked like wood—instead of masquerading, for instance, as sham marble columns, latticework and board-and-batten construction were logical responses. In fact, Boxwood's verandas are without question one of the earliest surviving instances in the state of latticed porch construction. Downing was also a pioneer American proponent of the idea that architecture and landscape should interact harmoniously. Thus he viewed steeply pitched gables and pointed windows—features typically linked with Gothic Revival design—as appropriate for a mountainous area. Boxwood's location in the Appalachian foothills region of northeastern Alabama may have dictated the style chosen by its owner, in collaboration, perhaps, with the house's unknown builder. (Interestingly, two more of Alabama's Gothic Revival dwellings are to be found in the same area—though neither is as early, nor so clearly related to the root of the movement, as Boxwood. These are the Fannin house, also in Talladega, and the Gunnels house, at nearby Oxford.) Yet while Boxwood's design broke radically with still-prevalent southern classicism, the house preserved such mainstay southern domestic features as a cross-ventilated rear dining wing, flanked on both sides by latticed galleries, as well as an outside kitchen and servants' quarters. This, in a sense, adds to the structure's significance as a Downing-type Gothic Revival house in a state where such dwellings were negligible in number; yet a domicile which still retained a peculiarly southern air about it.

While there is no clue as to Boxwood's architect-builder, it is conceivable that he was Hiram H. Higgins, who in 1851 designed the nearby Masonic Female College (now Manning Hall). One of the most gifted of Alabama's early builder-architects, Higgins was, in the 1850s, advertising his willingness to design not only in the "Grecian" style, but the "Tudor," the "Gothic," and other new trends of the day. Furthermore, the basic format which occurs at Boxwood—that of a slightly offset rear wing separated from the main block by a secondary hall—was a favorite Higgins formula.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

N/A

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .9

Quadrangle name Talladega

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A 

116	581401010	31701081510
Zone	Easting	Northing

B 

Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert Gamble, Architect Historian

organization Alabama Historical Commission date November, 1982

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone (205) 832-6621

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Clarence Parks*

title SAPO - Ex. Dir. AHC. date 4-19-83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

**Entered in the National Register**

*Allores Byun* date 6/9/83  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

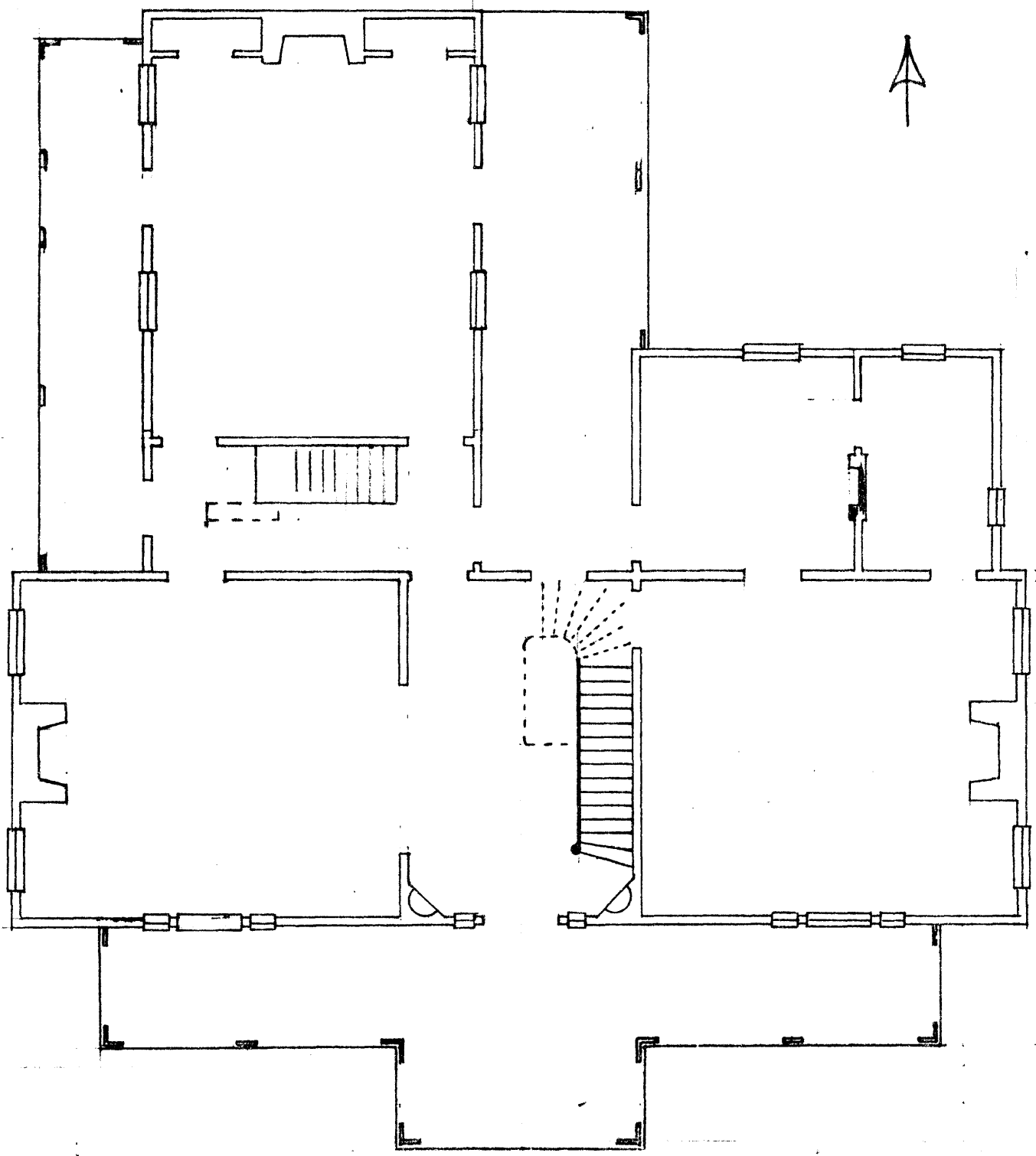
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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Lot 9 and part of lot 8 in the resurvey of Woodward Court. Part of lot 8 is described as follows: begin at the S.E. corner of lot 9 and proceed westerly a distance of 220' to the S.W. corner of lot 8 which is the point of beginning: thence turn right and proceed northerly along the west line of said lot 8 for 190' more or less to a point on the west line of said lot 8; then right and easterly to a point which is the intersection of the west line of lot 9 and the south line of lot 7; thence right and proceed southerly 190' more or less along the west line of said lot to 9 to the S.E. corner of lot 8; then right and proceed westerly along south line of lot 8 to the point of beginning. Said tract being 220 feet more or less by 190'; 220' on North Street East and 190' on 17th Street. Includes house and outbuildings.

Boxwood  
TALLADEGA



0 4' 8'